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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: PHUM KDEM AM

SUBJECT: NOMINATION FOR HRDF: CIVIC ACCOUNTABILITY

REFTEL: STATE 065804

1. (U) Sensitive but Unclassified. Please protect accordingly.

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SUMMARY  
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2. (SBU) Post nominates the program "Police and Regional Prison Monitoring" for the Human Rights and Democracy Fund, FY04. This program capitalizes on a stated GOAM willingness to allow monitoring of detention facilities, expands an existing prison monitoring program, and proposes a system of public oversight of police actions. The program builds on local and regional initiatives and furthers the mission's commitment to empowering Armenian citizens within the framework of democracy. The total cost of the program is USD 7,800. The program would last 8 months but is very likely to provide sustained benefits to Armenian monitoring efforts. End Summary.

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CURRENT MONITORING DIFFICULTIES  
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3. (SBU) Citizen observers have obtained more access to prisons since the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) began administering the Armenian prison system in 2002, and local human rights NGOs have taken advantage of this opening. In 2003 eleven Armenian NGOs created the Civil Society Monitoring Board (CSMB) in cooperation with the MOJ. One member of each participating NGO sits on the Board. This group has relatively free access to prisons in Armenia, and will make its first annual report to the MOJ and the local news media later in 2004. This group, however, is limited in three ways: their activities outside the capital are sporadic because transportation is expensive for local NGOs; their numbers are small (only eleven monitors have been trained); and they have no access to police facilities.

4. (SBU) The leadership of the National Police (NP) has been unwilling to allow monitors into police facilities. Even though a 2002 law requires the NDP and the MOJ to open their respective facilities to public inspection, police facilities have remained closed to observers. NGOs believe that Armenian police abuse detainees, but citizens are currently unable to measure the extent of this abuse.

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TRAINING COULD FILL THE GAP  
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5. (SBU) Post nominates "Police and Regional Prison Monitoring" for the Human Rights and Democracy Fund FY04. The local Helsinki Committee, which is loosely affiliated with the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, would monitor the grant, create a framework for effective monitoring of prisons in regional areas, and establish a program to visit police facilities. In the long term, the program plans to create an oversight institution with the power to observe and prevent the inhumane treatment of Armenians in detention.

6. (SBU) The program would last for 8 months and cost USD 7,800. In the first month, the CSMB would identify regional partners and train them in prison and police facility monitoring. Planning and training would be followed by four months of prison monitoring in the regions. During this period, the CSMB would also approach the NP to secure an agreement on monitoring police facilities. The CSMB currently observes prisons around Yerevan, but regional observations would intensify under this program. This experience would give the CSMB a track record of success with which to approach the NP. The program would use the remaining

three months to train additional observers to observe police facilities. After completion of the program, the CSMB would write reports on the treatment of detainees in prison and police custody, in compliance with deadlines negotiated with the MOJ and the NP. Both would be independent, public reports. If the NP had not yet agreed to inspections, a plan of next steps could be substituted for that report.

¶17. (U) The cost of the program would be as follows:

Coordinator	8 months X USD 100	800
Data Analyst and writer	8 months X USD 100	800
Computer		800
Training materials/stationery		1,200
Transportation for training and observation		2,000
Total cost:		USD 5,400

¶18. (SBU) The local NGOs affiliated with CSMB would provide trainers, observers, and office space. The Norwegian Helsinki Committee and the OSCE currently provide additional expert advice and training assistance to the CSMB. Both agencies have signaled their willingness to provide additional training support during the period of this program.

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PROVEN AND UNIQUE  
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¶19. (SBU) The OSCE is familiar with a similar program in neighboring Georgia. The local OSCE encouraged Armenian NGOs to form the Civil Society Monitoring Board in an attempt to emulate the Georgian model. Like the Georgian program, the Civil Society Monitoring Board trains individuals to monitor prisons, arranges access with the MOJ, and collects its findings in an annual report. This proposed program, however, is a first for Armenia. It plans to examine the treatment of detainees nation wide and seeks to create a model for monitoring police facilities.

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TOWARDS DEMOCRACY  
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¶10. (SBU) With widespread allegations of police brutality in the penal system, this project is needed now. By expanding prison monitoring and initiating monitoring of police detention facilities, this project has the potential to gather key information for further discussion and would serve as a deterrent to inhumane treatment. Most importantly, it would serve as an example of how citizens can work to monitor and check government power.

¶11. (SBU) This program fits firmly within critical mission Human Rights priorities. Embassy Yerevan has identified key Mission goals, working to create "sustainable democratic institutions" and to "empowering citizens to hold government accountable." CSMB is creating a transparent system of on-going observation. The proposed program would consolidate and extend current gains.

¶12. (SBU) The effects of "Police and Regional Prison Monitoring" are fully sustainable. The program trains individuals, creates a model, and gives a small amount of equipment to a group that has shown its ability to sustain a prison monitoring system. The program would create additional human and material resources the group can use to bolster further efforts.

¶13. (SBU) Embassy personnel would evaluate the efficacy of the program based on five criteria: the number of regions covered, the number of volunteers trained, the completion of a monitoring agreement with the MIA, the number of police detention facilities visited, and the quality of the public reports produced. Poloff Peter Covington would be the Embassy Action Officer, with Aaron Sherinian as back-up. Post has one State officer with grant signing authority, who would be present at Post through the completion of the project, in addition to USAID grant authorizing officers. The State officer's authority is limited to USD 100,000.

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COMMENT  
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¶14. (SBU) "Police and Regional Prison Monitoring" is extremely timely for Armenia. Recent administrative detentions have shown the need for adequate monitoring of police activities and citizen oversight. In addition, we support creating a public, non-governmental oversight board. Many governments in the Commonwealth of Independent States lack citizen

oversight boards, and this lack of citizen oversight hinders the growth of genuine democracy in these nations. "Police and Regional Prison Monitoring" should be funded on its own merits and for the example it sets in a region of developing democracies.

ORDWAY